# Virtual Learning Network Community



**Business Plan**

**2012**

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1. Business overview

## Introduction

The Virtual Learning Network Community (VLNC) is a charitable trust set up in April 2010 to provide a formal structure for what had previously been a loose collaboration of schools and clusters, which had grown ‘organically’ over the last ten to eleven years from twelve schools in the OtagoNet cluster in 2002 to over two hundred schools nationally, providing for over 1500 students (2010). The VLN-C Council is the formally constituted body that provides governance and strategic oversight of the Virtual Learning Network Community

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While the organisation is in its infancy, its members have a wealth of knowledge and experience in online learning. It is this accumulated wisdom and expertise of the VLN-C members, plus the commitment to collaboration and reciprocity that make this community unique within the education sector of New Zealand.

**VLNC – Vision**

The Virtual Learning Network Community is committed to educational transformation across the New Zealand education system, and the adoption of 21st century learning practices which are flexible, individualised and multi-modal.  It is committed to ensuring ALL learners have access to a quality, public education:

## VLNC - Core values

1. Learner centred
2. Interdependence. A network of networks
3. Reciprocity, Community and Collaboration
4. Knowledge building and knowledge sharing.

**VLNC – Purpose**

*The purpose of the VLN Community is to facilitate and support coherent organisation of educational activities, within and across ‘Communities of Schools’ (CoSs), which promote the vision and values of the Virtual Learning Network Community Charter.*

*In particular the VLN Community will, through its members and the council :*

*2.1 facilitate national level****educational activities****;*

*2.2 provide national level ‘****voice’/advocacy for CoSs****and build the institutional recognition;*

*2.3* ***address issues****of the immediate & longer term sustainability of CoSs;*

*2.4 assume joint ownership and responsibility of ongoing****development of the Virtual Learning Network sites and services,****in line with any relevant contracts and/or memorandums of understanding in force at the time;*

*2.5 f****oster a culture of innovation & knowledge building****which enhances and enriches learning;*

*2.6 facilitate national and regional level****collaboration and flow of ideas****in a coherent and effective way;*

*2.7* ***facilitate/provide professional growth and mentoring****for eTeachers, eDeans, CoS leadership and other VLNC members; and*

*2.8 provide****guidance & support****role for CoSs (existing and emerging) and new schools.*

In summary, The VLNC sees itself as an organisation that can provide the ‘matrix for growth’ and act as a ‘catalyst for educational transformation’, and to generally promote, develop, utilise and support educational services and resources across the New Zealand education system

**VLNC – Value Proposition**

1. Curriculum breadth, student retention, teacher retention. The VLNC, **supported by the MoE**, facilitates and provides a national course brokerage system which expands the curriculum choice for students at member schools. Benefits include:
   1. Student retention.
   2. Teacher retention as teachers are able to teach senior classes that would not be viable under a traditional school system.
   3. Flexibility and choice for student learning. This includes access to tertiary courses which support the development of student career pathways.
2. Centralised representation. As a formal structure the organisation is able to engage with other institutions and organisations which enables the geographically and demographically diverse group of member schools to have co-ordinated and centralised representation at a national level. This includes the potential to enter into strategic partnerships with other organisations and educational institutions on behalf of its members.
3. A hub for knowledge sharing and knowledge building across the education sector. This gives schools access to a continually evolving and expert knowledge base with regards to community building, curriculum development and elearning. This ensures the knowledge, experience and expertise built over the years is retained and independent of individuals.
4. The work being done by communities of schools aligns with elements of the MoE’s strategic direction and the New Zealand Curriculum. Refer to appendix A for more detailed information

*In summary, the VLNC exists to represent the interests of its members, and through leveraging the shared expertise and resources of the collective, aims to achieve the best outcomes for learners, educational institutions and communities of school. This federated approach will preserve the autonomy of local communities while accruing benefits for each that cannot be achieved at a local level, as well as across the whole system nationally.*

**VLNC - Competitive advantage**

The Competitive advantage of the VLNC lies in the following key areas:

1. MoE Support through the provision of infrastructure and essential services at no or little cost.
2. The course brokerage system, which includes access to primary and secondary courses and also to tertiary institutions and courses.
3. The communities combined knowledge, skills and expertise, built up over more than ten years, in the areas of ICT and online learning.
4. The size of its membership. Over 200 schools are represented through the VLNC.
5. It is a network of networks based on cooperation, collaboration and trust which aligns with the concept of a network for learning.
6. VLNC schools have developed a set of shared protocols that address the way schools and clusters interact regarding the delivery of online courses through the VLNC brokerage system.
7. The organisation is based upon a federated model which allows the independence and uniqueness associated with individual communities to be maintained.

**VLNC - Growth Pathways**

1. Expand the membership of the VLNC and enter into strategic partnerships with like-minded organisations and institutions (e.g. DEANZ). This is to ensure the sustainability of the VLNC.
2. Clarify and develop the relationship/partnership between the VLNC and the MoE.
3. Develop the VLNC profile.
4. Develop effective working and/or project groups within the community to ensure distributed leadership and the meeting of strategic objectives.
5. Revisit funding and membership options and models to meet the needs of a growing community
6. Ensure the Council is representative of the leadership within the wider community.
7. Increase confidence in the quality and viability of online learning programmes.
8. Identify the competition and address the threats and opportunities that arise with it.

2. Swot Analysis

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **STRENGTHS** | **OPPORTUNITIES** | **WEAKNESSES** | **THREATS** |
| **SOCIETY** | * Credibility and trust developed with existing schools and clusters * Expertise of staff * Relationships with providers outside of the clusters themselves * Involved with the instigation and development of the LCO handbook and VPLD programme * Research base developing | * Build the success stories and research for credibility * Greater links with early childhood and tertiary * Strengthen relationships with Maori education providers * Develop wider influences – Govt departments, businesses, language schools, ITOs etc. | * Free services are not properly valued and possibly taken for granted * Lack of clear understanding of value proposition. * Tensions of regional focus ahead of national focus. * Poor integration of new schools and CoS which inhibits their participation in the VLNC as a whole, and hence adversely affects the benefits of membership. | * Loss of key staff, especially due to uncertainty of employment. * Change of leadership within community schools and change of schools’ participation in the CoS. * Lack of widespread knowledge about the existence and role of VLN-C in the sector. |
| **TECHNOLOGY** | * MoE bridge * Schools have greater access to equipment and internet services including video conferencing and web conferencing * VLN-IS – existing services provided by MoE. * Roll out of RBI and UFB | * Increased network speed and reliability over NfL. * To broker the purchase of online services. | * Age of technology – need to replace kit in many schools * Age of MoE bridge. | * MoE decision on Network for Learning may limit speed and capacity of network, and limit access to services used by VLN-C member schools. * Speed of rollout – some schools may not be connected in near future. * SNUPS not keeping pace with fibre rollout |
| **ECOLOGY1** | * Growing no. of schools aware of possibilities networking can bring – in both existing areas (rural/regional) and emerging (urban) * Ten year history of successful practice | * Provision of (shared) services to schools * Professional learning of principals * Collaborative resource development and sharing * Virtual staff meetings/departments | * Insular view of some schools/communities * Lack of history of sharing in this way. * Lack of regular communication and information flow with membership and the wider educational community | * Ongoing perception of competition * Policy inhibitors * Assessment practices that stifle collaborative development * Industrial tensions |
| **ECONOMY** | * History of support from MoE has enabled development through the establishment phase, and into consolidation. | * Realisation of broader benefits across multiple areas * Move from an ‘additive’ to an ‘ecological’ mindset * Greater sharing of resources, ideas and experience between clusters | * Sustainability without guaranteed funding * Dependent on volunteer culture * Schools/clusters reluctant to pay an ongoing fee | * Lack of guaranteed funding beyond 2012 * Uncertainty about cost of RBI and UFB connection and services, |
| **POLITICAL** | • Contribution to government goals of ensuring access to educational opportunities for all students. | * Work more closely with MoE * Influence Govts NfL and UFBiS strategy * Provide research into successful program implementation and its impact on schools | * Unclear parameters and roles within the organisation causes tensions between participating members. * Fragmentation – members form cliques and develop their own agenda due to point above. | * Government decision re Network for Learning may impose solutions that are not consistent with the culture and intent of the VLN-C. |

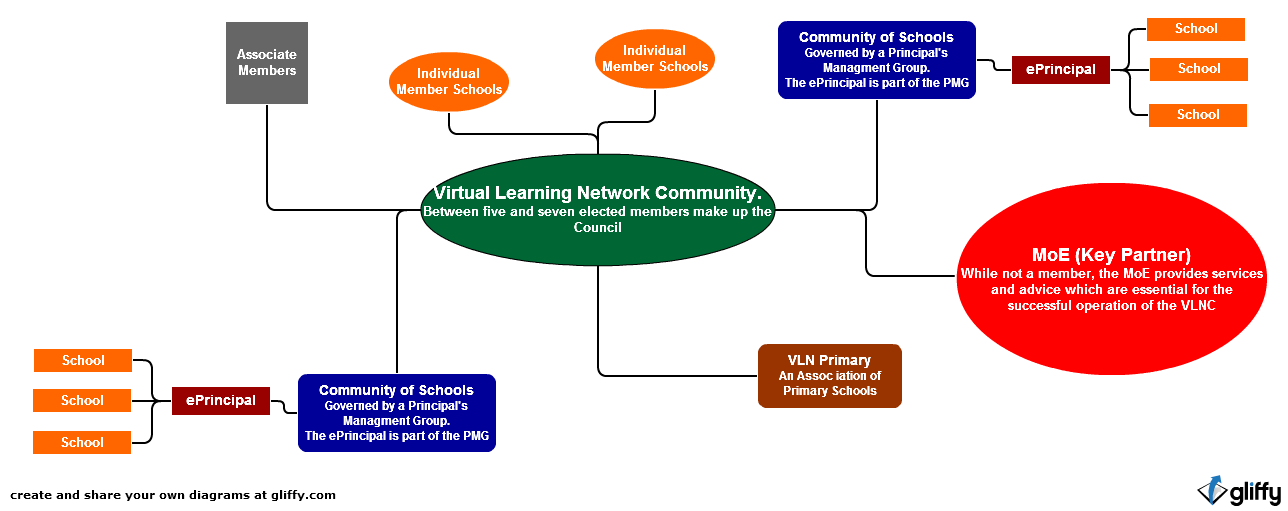
3. Strategic Directions. In addition to the strategic directions, a detailed action plan has been developed which addresses all points, 2.1 to 2.8, of the purpose and function of the VLNC.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reference to Constitution** | **Plan** | **Action** | **Who** | **Budget** |
| **2.2** - Institutional recognition  **2.2** - Voice/Advocacy  **2.3** - Sustainability | Expand the membership of the VLNC and enter into strategic partnerships  Clarify and develop the partnership/relationship between the MoE and the VLNC. | 1. Engage with other like-minded groups and educational institutions. E.g. Super loop, PPTA, MLE, MoE, NZEI, DEANZ, tertiary institutions, etc. Members attend meetings, identify key personnel, develop working relationships with the groups and raise the profile of VLNC schools. 2. Through 1 above and where feasible, the VLNC looks to become a member of, and/or forms strategic partnerships with any of the groups above. This should include encouraging such groups to become members of the VLNC, and visa versa. 3. Following on from 2 above, where partnerships, alliances or new membership requires changes to the VLNC constitution, this should be considered and suggested changes brought before the membership for consideration and ratification. 4. Revisit the relationship and agreements between the MoE and VLNC. | ePrincipals, VLNC principals, council members. | $2,000 |
| **2.2** - Institutional recognition.  **2.2** - Voice  **2.3** – Sustainability.  **2.4** – VLNC network sites and services.  **2.8** - Provide guidance and support | Develop the VLNC Profile | 1. Individuals present at national and regional educational conferences on behalf of their schools but also as members of the VLNC. This includes principals’ conferences, AP/DP conferences, etc. 2. Increase the number of articles published by VLNC members or about the VLNC in educational magazines such as the Education Gazette, Interface magazine, Computers in Schools, Principal today, etc. 3. Develop a coherent web presence that serves the interest of our members, and which members actively contribute to. 4. Review and if necessary design a new VLNC logo. 5. Publish a VLNC newsletter at least once a term. | ePrincipals, VLNC principals, council members. | $2,400 |

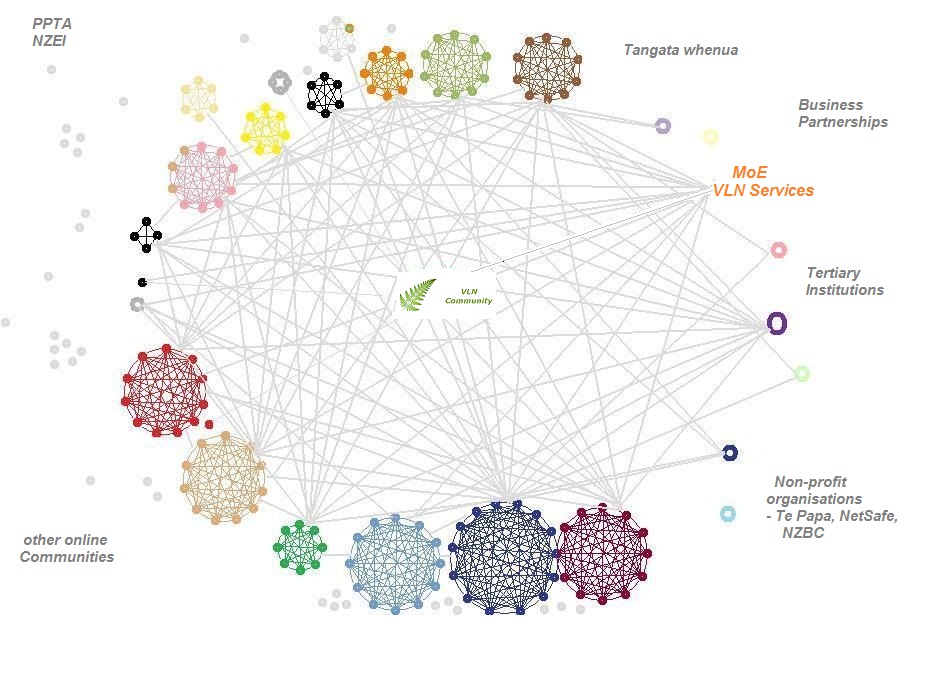
|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reference to Constitution** | **Plan** | **Action** | **Who** | **Budget** |
| This addresses points **2.1** to **2.6**.regarding the purpose and function of the VLNC in the constitution. | Develop effective working and/or project groups | 1. Review the role and effectiveness of the working group model. 2. Re-establish the monthly VLNC meetings as the hub for decision making and information flow and sharing. 3. Develop an effective model of distributed leadership which enables the VLNC to address the priority areas as identified by the council and the wider VLNC membership. These areas are **currently** as follows: 4. VLNIS 5. Communications 6. Sustainability 7. National Educational Activities 8. Personalised Learning 9. Maori & Pasifika partnerships   Due to their importance to the overall growth of the VLNC, some of these areas have been specifically and individually addressed in this plan.   1. A detailed action plan is available for each of these groups to follow. 2. Group/Project leaders report back at least once a term to the wider membership on progress. Noteworthy developments are reported in the termly newsletter. | ePrincipals, VLNC principals, council members. | $0 |
| **2.3** – Sustainability.  **2.6** – Facilitate national and regional level collaboration and flow of ideas in a coherent and effective way | Revisit funding and membership options and models. | 1. Based on the aspirations of the VLNC as noted above and in the detailed action plan, consider the need for a full time VLNC employee who will manage work flow and secretariat functions. 2. Review membership subscription amounts with a view to increasing subscription fees. 3. Review and clarify membership classes in the constitution, especially around fee paying membership 4. Pursue alternative funding options through the private sector. 5. Engage with the MoE around how students are funded at schools. 6. Engage with the MoE and the membership regarding the feasibility of some teachers only teaching online. (This overlaps with the correspondence school concept and may warrant the creation of a truly virtual school). | ePrincipals, VLNC principals, council members | $0 |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reference to Constitution** | **Plan** | **Action** | **Who** | **Budget** |
|  | Ensure the council is representative of the leadership in the wider community | 1. Review membership requirements of the VLNC and membership classes. Make changes where necessary to clarify and expand the membership base. 2. Poll the various membership groups to get feedback on their perception of equitable representation in the governance of the VLN Community 3. Review the make-up of the VLNC Council | ePrincipals, VLNC principals, council members | $0 |
| **2.3** – Sustainability.  **2.5** - foster a culture of innovation & knowledge building which enhances and enriches learning  **2.6** – Facilitate national and regional level collaboration and flow of ideas in a coherent and effective way. | Increase confidence in the quality and viability of online learning programmes. | 1. Investigate what makes a good online teacher and do VLNC eTeachers reflect these characteristics? We already have this information, but needs to be collated and formalised. 2. Provide mentoring and PD for eTeachers and eDeans by eTeachers/eDeans, ePrincipals and learning experts. Part of this process could be funded and organised centrally. Other elements are already handled at a cluster level but we could look to develop a more collaborative approach to the training of eTeachers and eDeans. 3. Community statement put out to all member schools and clusters regarding systems which support effective online learning, e.g. time for eDeans, spaces for students to learn, access to IT, etc. This is to back up and support good practice already happening in some schools and clusters. 4. Centrally develop material which can be used to inform school communities about online learning, its benefits and challenges. This is currently done individually by clusters. 5. Develop an eTeacher award for the best eTeacher in the country. Will require nominations, etc and a decent prize which we can get donated or pay for. | ePrincipals, members of working groups | $0 |
| **2.3** – Sustainability | Identify the competition and address the threats and opportunities that arise with it | 1. To be discussed at council and community meetings. Discussion should begin at a cluster level with feedback from Principal Management Groups. Council to collate feedback along with suggestions on how to address the threats and opportunities. | Council  VLNC members (Principals and ePrincipals) | $0 |

1. Community Structure
   1. Basic Membership Structure



* 1. Network Structure – the connections and relationships



**Diagram courtesy of Ken Pullar - OtagoNet**

5. Funding

The **current** funding models for Communities of Schools (CoS) and the VLNC is as follows:

**Courses –** Internally Funded. Each school delivers at least one online course **free of charge (Concept of Reciprocity)**. For secondary schools, this amounts to 0.2 FTE, assuming the eTeacher is given a subject line to deliver the course. For VLN primary schools, teachers do not have the luxury of a subject line and hence the school cost will be less than 0.2 FTE. In return each school can enrol their students in courses available through the VLNC brokerage system.

**Community Activities (projects and professional development)** –These are either free, through membership of the VLNC, or are directly/indirectly funded by the MoE (e.g. Hotseat VPLD sessions). The end result is that schools currently do not directly pay for these benefits.

**CoS** – There are three models in use. The first is where each school transfers staffing and cash to the fund holding / lead school. This is to pay for the ePrincipal, eDean and a cluster budget. No external source of funding is accessed. The second is where school contributions are subsidised or supplemented by access to funding through various community trusts and/or regional ICT PD funding. This model still has an ePrincipal and eDean, but in addition may have other facilitators paid from the ICT PD funding. The third model is where CoS are entirely funded through by the MoE. E.g. VLN primary, Kura project and Ellinz. External sources of funding are finite and for a limited time, or a specific project. Communities of schools within the first two funding models are currently sustainable and committed to remaining so. It is uncertain whether the communities funded through the third model are sustainable in the long run without continual funding support from the MoE.

**Virtual Learning Internet Services**. – The audio/video bridge, web conferencing facilities (Adobe Connect Pro), hosting of the lesson brokerage system (through the VLN ELGG site) and the provision of hosting and development for Moodle, Mahara and LAMS is currently provided by the MoE at no cost to the VLNC members.

**VLNC** **Council** – Funded through membership subscription. Each member school pays $50 per annum

**Budgeted Income and Expenditure**

**For the year ended 31 December 2012**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Budget 2012**  **$** | **Actual 2011**  **$** |
| **Income** |  |  |
| Membership subscriptions (124 schools) | 6,200 | 6,193 |
| Interest | 372 | - |
| Total Income | 6,572 | 6,193 |
| **Expenditure** |  |  |
| Accounting fees | 260 | 222 |
| Bank fees | - | 5 |
| Catering and meeting costs | 700 | 570 |
| Newsletter | 400 | - |
| Promotions | 1,200 | - |
| Fees written off | - | 400 |
| Travel and accommodation (meetings and AGM) | 2,820 | 2,527 |
| Website and Logo development | 1,000 | - |
| Total Expenditure | 6,400 | 3,724 |
| Surplus | 172 | 2,469 |

**Budgeted Balance Sheet**

**at 31 December 2012**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Budget 2012**  **$** | **Actual 2011**  **$** |
| **Assets** |  |  |
| *Current assets* |  |  |
| Bank | 8,184 | 9,302 |
| Accounts receivable | 0 | (51) |
| Total Assets | 8,184 | 9,251 |
| **Liabilities** |  |  |
| *Current liabilities* |  |  |
| Accounts payable | 0 | 1,467 |
| GST | 31 | (197) |
| Total liabilities | 31 | 1,270 |
|  |  |  |
| **Net Assets** | 8,153 | 7,981 |
|  |  |  |
| **Equity** |  |  |
| Balance at 1 January | 7,981 | 5,512 |
| Surplus for the year | 172 | 2,469 |
| Balance at 31 December | 8,153 | 7,981 |

6. Summary

The VLNC is at a cross roads in a time of rapid change in the eLearning landscape.

This plan addresses where we are now, but with strategies to take us forward which will hopefully grow the community profile, give it greater influence and greater access to funding. These are not easy tasks and will require input from all members and a willingness to challenge the status quo of our own organisation/association. The budgeted financial statements only take in to account funding from members at $50 per member. Hence any costs over and above that which we have budgeted for, e.g. promotion and website development, will necessitate access to other funding sources. It should be made clear that for many schools, the current model of internally funding staff and accessing courses on a reciprocity basis is a sustainable one. The question is whether this model is scalable and appropriate for all members/potential members because it is based very much on the provision of on line, senior secondary courses. We should be prepared, therefore, to change where we need to change.

**APPENDIX A**

* Raising student achievement
* Addressing issues of equity in the NZ education system. (Maori/Pasifika)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Ministry Outcomes/Actions/Initiative** | **VLN/VLNC response** |
| **Priority Outcome** - Every young person has the skills and qualifications to contribute to their and New Zealand's future  **Action to meet goal** - Developing a 21st Century Infrastructure | * The VLN and the VLNC will form part of the **teaching and learning** infrastructure for a 21st century education system. It is delivering courses over the internet through Adobe Connect, Video conferencing and online learning environments. Currently there are 1300 students enrolled in online courses through the VLN. Educo (an MoE provided Moodle instance which services 23 schools) has over 5000 users and growing. The Wairarapa eLEarning Community has a Moodle instance servicing 8 schools with over 3000 users. * Students can access subjects they want to do regardless if they are available at their school. This includes access to tertiary courses. This increases chances of success in the subject. It also enables students to access courses in terms of their career pathways which assists with student retention and engagement. * The data gathered to date shows that on average 80% of students engaged in online courses achieve results which are as good as, or better than, their face to face class results. Around 20% of students achieve lower marks than their face to face classes. * The VLNC co-ordinates this response through its members and the leadership/governance provided by the VLNC council and the ePrincipals. |
| **Priority Outcome** - The Ministry is capable, efficient and responsive to achieve education priorities  **Action to meet goal** - Improving responsiveness and improving value for money | * The VLN/VLNC using existing school infrastructure to deliver courses around the country, offering courses that students would **not** normally have access to due to either the non-availability of specialist teachers or a timetable clash. The cost is the cost of personnel, which is currently born by the school in exchange for access to VLN courses. This provides a flexible response to meeting student choice/needs. The system also has the potential to have a single teacher employed by more than one school to deliver a course/s to their students. * Schools are already transferring staffing to other schools so that they can access teachers to deliver courses to their students through use of online technologies. E.g. L3 Biology is being taught to students at Northland College and Te Kura Pangaru by a teacher at Mangakino Area School (MAS). 0.2 Staffing has been transferred to MAS for this. Students have an hour VC lesson per week and access to an online learning environment (Moodle). * The VLN/VLNC virtual school does not require the bricks and mortar investment associated with the current schooling system. It works on a distributed delivery model, with students accessing courses from institutions around NZ without having to leave their home school. * Average class size for VLN classes is 9 students. Maximum class size is 17 students. Based on current enrolments, average cost per senior secondary student works out at $1,494. Working on enrolments of 17 students per class, this can be reduced to an average cost of $812 per student. The model is scalable and benefits from economies of scale. |
| Ka Hikitia – importance of whanau and community  Ka Hikitia – raising Maori student achievement as Maori | * Students are able to remain in their communities and access courses they would not normally be able to access without leaving their communities or having to travel. Students therefore maintain their support structures and identity as Maori. * The VLNC provides the opportunities for Maori communities to network and collaborate across distances. Sharing ideas, practices, teachers, events as Maori. * Maori Students at Kura and rural schools have the opportunity to be in a virtual class with students from around New Zealand which expands their experience. They often have the opportunity to meet these students and their teacher face to face which again expands their experiences and enables them to view new opportunities. * The VLNC addresses the inequity regarding access to quality teaching and learning and to courses which are not on offer due to the lack of specialist teachers or economic constraints. This inequity is often associated with rural isolation and tends to effect students in schools which have a large percentage of Maori and/or Pasifika students. * There is a shortage of quality teachers of Te Reo, especially in the South Island. The VLN/VLNC is able to address this issue by giving students access to Te Reo teachers regardless of their geographic location. * Learning in an e-Learning-rich environment may make peer and collaborative learning opportunities easier, thus supporting students’ cognitive, affective and social interactions. These ways of working also appear to suit many New Zealand students, including Maori (as outlined in documents such as Key Evidence, Ministry of Education, 2008; Bishop and Berryman, 2006) and Pasifika (Franken, May, & McComish 2005). These ways of working may lead to improved educational outcomes. |
| New Zealand Curriculum – Effective Pedagogy | **E-learning and pedagogy**  e-learning may:   * assist the making of *connections* by enabling students to enter and explore new learning environments, overcoming barriers of distance and time. **This is what the VLNC does now through video conferencing, web conferencing and online learning environments. There is a national timetable for all VLNC courses and policies and procedures which support and enable these connections to occur.** * facilitate *shared learning* by enabling students to join or create communities of learners that extend well beyond the classroom. **The VLNC has organised for this to happen through links with overseas schools, TE Papa and the National Library.** * assist in the creation of *supportive learning environments* by offering resources that take account of individual, cultural, or developmental differences. **Online learning environments, if designed and constructed correctly, are able to provide more personalised and individualised learning opportunities. The LAMS project with Ten Kura is an example of using online learning environments to deliver learning content to Maori students. The VLNC is connecting students from Kura with teachers they would not normally have access to, and connecting students with Te Reo teachers based at various Kura that these students would not normally have access to.** **The VLNC Council has a Maori representative who is in contact with Kura, with Maori teachers and involved with various Maori education initiatives. There is a specific working group focussed on Maori/Pasifika learners in the online learning environment.** * enhance *opportunities to learn* by offering students virtual experiences and tools that save them time, allowing them to take their learning further. This is what the VLNC is all about. Using synchronous and asynchronous web technologies   Schools should explore not only how ICT can supplement traditional ways of teaching but also how it can open up new and different ways of learning. **The VLNC and the virtual learning that it supports is using technology to support different ways of learning. Students are being asked to learn in an environment where they only see their teachers once or twice a week and this is via video or web conferencing. Further connections with their teacher and fellow students are made asynchronously through email, online chat and forums. Resources are online and paper based. Assignments and assessments are submitted on line and on paper.**  **The whole concept of blended learning is one which the VLNC embraces. The practices applied and learned in this virtual environment are being transferred to face to face environments and have the potential to change how face to face teaching and learning takes place. The VLNC has the potential to do away with formalised timetables whereby students access their learning when, where and how it suits them and negotiate with teachers when formal meeting times need to and can occur.** |
| NZC – Managing Self | Learning in a blended learning environment, especially the current VLNC model, requires students to be well organised and motivated. Support structures are in place at schools to help students make this transition to a more learner focussed and learner responsible environment. Students learn how to manage self as part of the process they follow to experience success and achievement in their chosen subject. When students were asked about what they found good about online learning, they agreed that learning to be more responsible and accountable for how they spent their time was something they would be able to take with them in to tertiary education/training. |
| NZC – relating to others | A big part of the VLNC model is the establishment of relationships as this is central to effective learning. The challenge is that these relationships are developed over distance. Therefore special care is taken by teachers to nurture the relationships. However it also requires students to be proactive in developing the relationship with their teacher and fellow students. The ability to relate to others is critical in the online learning environment because students need to feel comfortable interacting online in chat rooms and forums and also working in shared environments such as wikis and google docs. |
| NZC – participating and contributing | This element of online learning is closely linked with relating to others. This is because online environments tend to be more open and collaborative. Therefore, while participation and contributing is essential for effective learning to occur in the blended learning / video conference environment, it will also necessitate an element of relating to others at the same time. |

The VLN/VLNC has the potential to create cohesiveness in eLearning initiatives. If there is wider representation on the VLNC, i.e. tertiary, primary and secondary plus Maori and Pasifika, the VLNC could operate on a cooperative model (driven by the needs and interests of its members). It can then partner with MoE and third party contractors like Core, Cognition, etc to deliver guidance, support, research and PD to schools, universities and polytechs. The VLNC can also be the hub for networked schools, providing a forum for collaboration and cooperation through the VLN ELGG environment.